Morris Cerullo Lawsuit

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MORRIS CERULLO SEEKS ABSOLUTION IN COURT OF APPEALS

SAN DIEGO, Ca., Nov. 14, 2001/ John Paul Warren-- Case gives literal meaning to scripture verse, "….false prophets will appear and deceive many people."

Morris Cerullo claims to be a miracle maker, but he is under investigation for being a money taker. John Paul Warren, a former Senior Executive and successor with Morris Cerullo World Evangelism (MCWE) has filed a lawsuit claiming he was ousted from the MCWE organization after confronting Cerullo about "unethical and fraudulent fund-raising techniques." This is the second such lawsuit against Cerullo. Warren, who is a highly respected, third-generation, ordained Assemblies of God Minister, filed his suit in May of 2000 in San Diego County Superior Court. He is represented by attorneys Dean Broyles and Tim Rutherford of San Diego, and Hunter Lundy, based in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Lundy successfully represented Marvin Gorman in his suit against televangelist Jimmy Swaggart in 1991, which resulted in a large verdict against Swaggart.

"Cerullo refers to himself as 'Dr. Cerullo,' although he does not have any degree earning him this title," says Lundy. "He runs MCWE from offices in San Diego, which he calls 'mission control,' but he does not serve as the minister of any physical church or congregation." Cerullo raised millions of dollars and bought the defunct PTL Network, theme park and conference grounds from bankruptcy court after Televangelist Jim Bakker's career ended when he was convicted and sent to federal prison for fraud.

"Cerullo purports to have first met God at the age of eight. Since then, his life has apparently been one unbelievable experience after another," says Lundy. "He says he was led out of a Jewish orphanage by two angelic beings; transported to heaven for a face-to-face meeting with God; has the ability to predict the future; can heal the sick; and has told audiences when they look at him they 'are looking at God.' He also asks them to 'give me your pocket books.' "

According to Broyles, Cerullo's primary focus is raising millions of dollars in the name of God to support his own personal lavish lifestyle both overseas and in the United States. He says, "The victims of Cerullo's tactics and the source of his millions are the elderly, widows and poor here in the United States as well as in distressed third world nations." Broyles says Cerullo's fundraising tactics include direct solicitations, prayer rallies, the sale of videotapes, prayer networks, television marketing and mail campaigns, among others, all of which are based upon misrepresentations and false promises.

Warren, who has first-hand knowledge of MCWE operations, says, "Cerullo made countless promises to his donors he never intended to keep. He would raise money for popular projects that would generate extraordinary donor support, then never do the project, but keep the money." Warren says shortly after moving to San Diego to assume the leadership of MCWE he discovered that Cerullo used the charitable status of MCWE to personally profit. "Cerullo merchandises the gospel for his own personal wealth," says Warren. Warren has asked Cerullo to repent for his deceptive fundraising practices and to return millions to his donors, but Cerullo refused.

Cerullo's son, David Cerullo, runs the former PTL Network, now known as the Inspiration (INSP) Network based in North Carolina, which serves as a primary medium for disseminating Cerullo's solicitation programs and generating names for future fundraising efforts. "Neither Cerullo's MCWE nor his Inspiration Network are financially accountable to any group," says Rutherford. "In fact, Cerullo, his son David and his wife Theresa are all members of MCWE's board of directors."

Warren's attorneys say their sources report 70% of Cerullo's income comes from profit-oriented business activities as opposed to the non-profit activities dictated by his tax-exempt status. "Cerullo lives in plush comfort in a multi-million dollar mansion behind two security gates on a luxurious estate in the exclusive Ranch Sante Fe neighborhood, purported to be the richest neighborhood in the country. MCWE owns and controls numerous business properties, several luxury automobiles and a gold-plated private jet. He is reported to have personally estimated his net worth at 100 million dollars. Does this sound like the lifestyle of a minister of the gospel?" asks Lundy.

Attorney's say trouble seems to be following Cerullo and his MCWE ministry. Numerous former employees have reported possible criminal violations to the Internal Revenue Service, U.S. Customs and the U.S. Postal Inspector. Cerullo has been banned from television in Great Britain unless he can authenticate the miracles he supposedly performs, and the Jewish community has protested what they call his underhanded attempts to convert practicing Jews

to Christianity. In addition, many established, respected religious organizations have distanced themselves from Cerullo and MCWE.

Attorneys in this case are deeply concerned that Cerullo's fundraising practices are harmful, especially to the elderly. Earlier this year, Superior Court Judge Linda B. Quinn denied a motion by Cerullo to dismiss Warren's claims. Cerullo has appealed Judge Quinn's ruling. He seeks immunity from litigation under the First Amendment to the Constitution. The appeal will be heard in the Superior Court of Appeals of the State of California at the San Diego County Courthouse at 9am on November 14.

A news conference will be held outside the courthouse immediately following the appeal hearing.